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TRUSTEES OF THE SCHOLARSHIP FUND

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Fourteenth Meeting of the Latin Club

The fourteenth regular meeting of The New York Latin Club is called for Saturday, February 18, at 12 M, in the Hotel St Denis, corner of Broadway and Eleventh Street, New York. Professor H C Elmer, of Cornell University, will address the club.

H H BICE, *President*

A L HODGES, *Secretary*

Extracts from a Teacher's Note Book

(PROFESSOR ROLFE'S ADDRESS BEFORE THE NEW YORK
LATIN CLUB, December 3, 1904)
In Five Parts, Part II

If we admit the difficulty of the Roman pronunciation, as I think we must, our obligation to use it, which I am willing to admit, is somewhat like the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution. We have it, we cannot make up our minds to repeal it, and if we do not like it, we must, like our southern brothers, evade it in some way. Now there are at least two ways of evading the difficulties of the Roman pronunciation. We may have our pupils read their Latin and let them do it in a loose and slovenly manner; or we may give up reading the Latin altogether and confine ourselves to translating it. The former is demoralizing to teacher and class alike. The latter is equally bad in my opinion, because, as I have said, I believe that it is only by constantly reading the Latin aloud that one can acquire a feeling for the language and the ability to translate it thoroughly well. So strong is this belief, that anything which tended to discourage the reading of Latin would have great difficulty in justifying its existence in my sight. That the Roman pronunciation is having this effect I am led to believe from talks that I have had with my students and with teachers in some of our best schools. A straw which to my mind shows how the wind blows is the fact, that many of our recent Beginners' Books have no lesson on pronunciation, and relegate all information on the subject to an Introduction.

It does not at all help the situation that now and then one runs across a conscientious soul who is giving so much time to pronunciation and to quantity, that he is neglecting practically everything else. I have never observed that such teachers accomplish anything in their hobby which at all compensates for what they do not do. I must say in self defense, that in spite of what I have said, I have never neglected either the reading of the Latin or the effort to secure a good pronunciation from my students; and I have no intention of doing either.

What then are we to do? I wish I knew a more satisfactory answer than that we must do the best we can. The spectre of the Roman pronunciation is always before us, from the beginning class to the seminary, and it stands between us and our work. Every course becomes in part a course in pronunciation. For example, I am teaching Latin writing to a class of juniors and seniors, in which a part of the work consists in reading model passages of Latin. Being mortal, their pronunciation is not faultless, and I am confronted with the alternative of wasting valuable time in correcting errors, or of letting them pass without correction. I can appreciate the attitude of the elder Pliny, who, as his nephew tells us (*Epist iii, 5, 12*), when a friend corrected the faulty pronunciation of a reader and compelled him to reread the passage correctly, said: "You understood him, didn't you?" And when his friend admitted that he did, said: "Then why did you make him repeat it? We have lost more than ten lines by this interruption". But a New England conscience will not always allow me to follow his example.

I would help the college student by having the long vowels marked in all his texts, both prose and poetry, as is now generally done in texts for the use of secondary schools. This is quite as legitimate as marking the accents in Greek texts, which are surely not more difficult than the Latin quantities, and it is idle to say that students should have learned their quantities by the time they get to college. They shouldn't—and they don't. Most of them never will, but the marked texts will help them.

I give this great idea freely to future editors of Series, of whom there must be many before me. I must add, however, that when I told my publisher that if we were beginning our Series again, I should strongly advocate such a plan, he devoutly thanked Heaven that the idea had come to me so late. But I believe that we shall all live to see this done, unless we are first persuaded to give up the Roman pronunciation altogether. Even with marked texts in their hands many students will mispronounce and even misaccent words, as I know by sad experience, but less frequently and with smaller justification.

I wish to say that this idea about the marked texts is not a haphazard one made on the spur of the moment, but the result of much thought and of deliberate conviction. Of course it may none the less be an erroneous one, but personally I believe in it. The great Indo-European philologist Osthoff marks his quantities even in the Latin examples in his publications, and I should like to see the appropriate macrons an indispensable part of every Latin word, wherever it be written and by whomsoever.

For the teacher of beginning Latin, who must teach a great mass of quantities in a single year, everything that can be done in this direction has been done, and I have nothing to suggest. It is in a

great measure the addition of this difficulty to the already sufficiently hard task of the beginner, that makes me agree with Professor Bennett that the introduction of the Roman pronunciation was of the nature of a leap in the dark.

It does not seem to me at all a serious phase of the subject, that there have been and always will be, changes of opinion and differences of opinion about some few "hidden quantities". I do not believe with some that we have seen the end of this or that any text with marked quantities, even if it was faultless in the beginning, can ever be sure of continuing to be so after the appearance of a new number of the *Classical Review*.

The *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* wavers between *cessi*, *cēssi*, and *cēssi*; most of our texts have *māgnus* and *māximus* against the best evidence; we must learn to say *hui-ius* and to leave off the macron from this word and from *ei-ius*; and *cōgnōscō* has shifted to *cognōscō* and thence to *cōngnōscō* within the memory of all of us; but all this matters little, and were this the worst of our difficulties we need lose no sleep.

One important point which I have never seen mentioned is this, that our students now have to learn both the English and the Roman methods of pronunciation and to change from one to the other. We are all agreed, I suppose, that proper names in translation should be pronounced by the English method, as well as such phrases as *vice versa*, *viva voce*, and others which have become part of our vernacular. As regards the proper names at least, this seems the only practicable thing. Some advocate pronouncing familiar names, such, for example, as Caesar and Cicero, by the English method and those less familiar by the Roman. But few would, I think, agree as to which names are to be classed as familiar. The student too would be forced to modify his usage as the sphere of his knowledge widened; to pronounce Aulus Gellius for example by the Roman method in his school-days, should he meet this name, and by the English method later. Now the English pronunciation of Latin is comparatively simple when one knows no other, but I should have considerable difficulty in reading a page of Caesar in that pronunciation to-day, or even in being consistent in pronouncing familiar phrases; and students, especially in their early years, are considerably troubled by the difference between the English and the Latin pronunciation of *Scipio*, *Zacynthus*, *Ausonia*, and countless other words—and even teachers carry over the sounds of the Roman pronunciation into their English versions.

It is certainly a curious circumstance, that in these days, when a thorough knowledge of quantity is so important, students do not, so far as my observation goes, commit to memory even the condensed and simplified rules of quantity of our modern grammars. Whereas in the days of which I spoke, in which we paid no attention to quantity even in Vergil, except for the purpose of dividing his verses into feet, on the first syllable of which we put a sledge-hammer ictus—in those idyllic days we learned in full all the rules of quantity, and all the exceptions thereto, in the allopathic doses prescribed by the grammarians of the period, quite regardless of the fact that we were never likely to meet some of the words we so glibly ran off.

The same thing is true in a great degree of the rest of the grammar and the reaction against the

old method of "gerund-grinding" has gone so far, that nowadays it is not considered good pedagogy to make a schoolboy learn anything that is difficult or uninteresting; reversing the wise saying of Mr Dooley, "it don't make no difference what you teach a boy, provided it's onpleasant to him". In spite of its context, Horace's

Nil sine magnō

Vita labōre dedit mortālibus

is a true saying and applies with great force to the learning of Latin, which, as Professor Bennett justly says, is a difficult language.

To return to my text, I have had no changes of heart as regards translation. This, it seems to me, should be the centre of the work for a good many years, and reading (including pronunciation), grammar, and other studies should be merely means to this chief end. It is perhaps superfluous to say here that translation should be idiomatic, that is, it should render Latin not word for word, but in well chosen English which conveys to the mind the same thoughts, even though not a single word be translated literally. Of course that would be an exceptional case, and the best translation is that which follows closely the phraseology and even the order of the original, *so far as this is consistent with good English, which should never be sacrificed*. The art of accurate, effective, and elegant translation is by no means an easy one, and it is worth the expenditure of a great deal of time and effort. It demands of the teacher not only a thorough knowledge of the language to be translated, but also of the resources of his own tongue. Furthermore, to translate any writer well, he must understand him as an individual as well as a writer of Latin. He should have read all his works, should understand his characteristic peculiarities and tricks of style, and should have a thorough acquaintance with his life, circumstances and environment in general.

Fortunately great progress has been made in this direction, and it is no longer considered necessary, as it once was, to ask students to translate literally, in order to be sure that they know their grammar. Yet there are traces of the old feeling left, and few of us and of our students always venture to translate freely enough to be really idiomatic. Of course in avoiding the Scylla of literalism we must beware lest we fall into the Charybdis of looseness and carelessness. A loose paraphrase is in no sense a translation.

To guide the course of the beginner between these two extremes is a task worthy of the teacher's best efforts, and we could attain no result which would commend itself more highly to the critics and enemies of classical study than that of teaching our students to translate well. They deride our pronunciation (I have read an editorial on the subject within a month in a New York paper—the *Tribune*, I think), they scoff at grammar, and they deny to the study of the classics even a disciplinary value; but the most hardened of them admit the importance of good English—even if they do not always use it—and there is surely no more effective method of teaching good English than by translating Greek and Latin properly. And I may add that there is no more effective way of teaching bad English than by allowing literal translation. Lest anyone should seek to refute me by criticizing my own English, I will say that I do not yet claim to be a good translator, and that I was brought up under the old regime.